

TRIBUTE TO JULIE COMINS

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 8, 2003

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I stand before you to recognize the efforts of a distinguished citizen from my district. Julie Comins is the Executive Director for the Aspen Writers' Foundation and, after six years of dedicated service, she will be stepping down next month to spend more time with her family. The organization has experienced tremendous growth during her tenure, and the entire Aspen literary community is saddened by her departure. Today, I would like to commend Julie on the fine work she has done for the writing community on behalf of the Foundation.

Julie began her time with the Foundation in 1997 when she volunteered to assist with one of the organization's major events, the Aspen Summer Words Conference. She went on to become a part-time administrative assistant for the organization, which was then a small nonprofit group. Within a year, Julie's hard work was rewarded with increased responsibility within the organization, eventually being named as Executive Director of the Foundation. Under Julie's watch, the group went from a relatively small society to a nationally renowned literary organization.

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to stand here today and pay tribute to Julie Comins' accomplishments before this body of Congress and this nation. The Aspen Writers' Foundation is a terrific organization and, thanks to Julie, it has grown to achieve remarkable success. I would like to thank Julie for her years of hard work and dedication and wish her the best in her future endeavors.

HONORING THE LOUIS STOKES
CLEVELAND VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEDICAL CENTER**HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 8, 2003

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor and recognition of the Louis Stokes Cleveland Veterans Affairs Medical Center and to celebrate the expanded and renovated space for veteran services at the McCafferty Building. For over four years the City of Cleveland and the Louis Stokes Cleveland Veterans Affairs Medical Center have been partners in serving veterans on Cleveland's west side.

The Louis Stokes Cleveland Veterans Affairs Medical Center has had a long and distinguished history of serving the veterans community over the past twenty years. The Veterans Center has participated in the community Homeless Coalition, offers assistance to hunger and homeless shelters in the area, and routinely joins with other local veterans service organizations to provide assistance to needy veterans.

The Veterans Center also offers many services to veterans outside of its central purpose of providing medical care for those who have honorably served our country. The Veterans Center provides individual readjustment counseling, referrals for benefits assistance, group

readjustment counseling, liaison with community agencies, marital and family counseling, substance abuse information and referral, job counseling and placement, and community education. The Veterans Center also provides group counseling for Vietnam Veterans, Homeless Veterans, veterans who have difficulties with substance abuse, and Korean War Veterans.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in recognizing the Louis Stokes Cleveland Veterans Affairs Medical Center on this special occasion and celebrating its dedication to serving the veterans of the Cleveland's west side, and the community of Northeast Ohio.

H.R. 3260—VETERANS' EXTENDED
HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND
BUSINESS ENHANCEMENTS ACT
OF 2003**HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 8, 2003

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing H.R. 3260 in bi-partisan collaboration with my colleague, the gentleman from Illinois and Ranking Member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, LANE EVANS. This bill would augment certain health care business practices and programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to achieve greater efficiencies and economies of scale. Other enhancements included in this bill would benefit the Department of Defense (DOD) and VA's nonprofit research corporations. The bill would also extend certain reporting dates and authorities of VA in the provision of health care services to our Nation's veterans. Finally, our bill would authorize the naming of the Prescott, Arizona Veterans Affairs Medical Center for the late Bob Stump, my predecessor as Chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would authorize a five-year extension to VA's authority to provide non-institutional extended care services and required nursing home care to certain veterans. The mounting importance of providing long-term care alternatives to our aging veterans is supported by the projected increase in veterans who are 85 years of age or older from some 644,000 today to 1.3 million within the next decade.

In 1999, Congress enacted the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act (Public Law 106-117), requiring VA to operate and maintain certain long-term care programs in nursing home care. This Act also contained initiatives in geriatric evaluation, domiciliary care, adult day health care, respite, palliative and hospice programs. All of these programs are intended to address the growing needs of aging and disabled veterans by both institutional and non-institutional means. The authorities for these programs in the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act will expire on December 31, 2003. This legislation would extend these authorities until December 31, 2008.

H.R. 3260 would also allow veterans who are former prisoners of war to receive outpatient dental care from VA, without requiring them to have been in captivity for at least 90 days, as under current law. This bill also

would eliminate the requirement under current law that ex-POWs must now pay pharmacy co-payments. These are tangible and justified enhancements showing the gratitude of the nation for the sacrifices of former prisoners of war.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would also streamline the process and notification requirements when VA intends to enter into an enhanced-use lease agreement for better use of underutilized VA property. Initially authorized in 1991, this unique asset management authority allows VA to enter into partnerships with private industry to yield the "highest and best" use of VA property for veterans, taxpayers, and the government.

The enhanced-use lease program was created by Congress to allow VA activities to generate revenue, maximize value, minimize costs, and maintain competitiveness by developing health care and long-term care facilities, parking, energy plants, transitional and independent senior housing, assisted living, research and development facilities, child and adult day care and office space (government and commercial) projects in partnerships with private and public entities. Since its inception, the enhanced-use lease program has generated cost savings, private investment, new long-term sources of revenues as well as jobs and expanded tax revenues.

Mr. Speaker, this program represents cost effective, good government. This bill would extend the benefits of the enhanced-use lease program to the Veterans Benefits and National Cemetery Administrations as well as the health care system. Current law limits the program to real estate assets of the Veterans Health Administration. This bill would allow the proceeds to be retained by the Veterans Health Administration, the Veterans Benefits Administration or the National Cemetery Administration, whichever administration initiated and developed the enhanced-use lease project.

This bill would allow the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to extend authority to the Secretary of Defense, beginning in fiscal year 2004, to purchase medical equipment, services and supplies through VA's revolving supply fund. This simple provision would serve to further expand federal purchasing power and enhance economies of scale.

Mr. Speaker, at the request of the Department, this bill would change statutory reporting dates on several reports VA is required to make to Congress. The bill would also provide certain Federal liability coverage to a very specific and small group of employees who work in the nonprofit research corporations authorized in title 38. Congress established these nonprofit corporations to manage non-appropriated research activities, primarily those funded through grants from the National Institutes of Health, philanthropic grants and a variety of clinical and pharmaceutical trials. Congress expanded the role of VA nonprofit corporations in 1999 to include a variety of educational endeavors for VA clinical care staff. Employees of these nonprofit corporations would have liability coverage equivalent to their VA counterparts. The bill would also authorize a five-year extension of the basic authority for these nonprofits through December 31, 2008.

The final provision of this bill is to honor our departed former Chairman, the Honorable Bob Stump. In June of this year, we were saddened by the loss of our former colleague who